

Appln. No. 10/613,603
Amendment dated April 16, 2004
Reply to Office Action of November 19, 2003
Attorney Docket No. 6009-4599US1

Amendments to the Claims

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1. (currently amended) A filter element to be used in removal of liquid from solids containing material, in conjunction with a capillary suction dryer, comprising:

a ceramic internal layer having at least two hollow recess areas for liquid flow, the recess areas extending along a longitudinal axis of the filter element opening only to one end of the filter element, the ceramic internal layer being made of at least one sintered substrate which continuously surrounds the at least two hollow recess areas; and

at least one essentially continuous, separately sintered ceramic microporous surface layer having a pore size under 5 micrometers, supported by the ceramic internal layer, the microporous surface layer surrounding the ceramic internal layer, in all regions except where the substrate is in contact with the capillary suction dryer.

Claims 2.-23. (canceled)

Claim 24. (previously presented) The filter element of claim 1, wherein the microporous layer is made from a ceramic material.

Claim 25. (previously presented) The filter element of claim 24, wherein the ceramic material is alumina, silicon carbide or titania.

Claim 26. (previously presented) The filter element of claim 1, wherein the microporous layer is made from a metal, a metal alloy, a polymer or graphite.

Claim 27. (previously presented) The filter element of claim 1, wherein said recess area has a pre-selected volume that is adapted to optimize flow characteristics of the filter element.

Claim 28. (previously presented) The filter element of claim 1, wherein the filter element has an optimum bulk volume ratio and wherein said recess area has a pre-selected volume to provide said optimum bulk volume ratio.

Claim 29. (previously presented) The filter element of claim 1, wherein the filter element has an optimum void volume ratio and wherein said recess area has a pre-selected volume to provide said optimum void volume ratio.

Claim 30. (previously presented) The filter element of claim 1, wherein the filter element is unitary; and wherein a glue is not used to join pieces of the filter element.

Claim 31. (previously presented) The filter element of claim 1, wherein the filter element is provided with a fitting area where the substrate of the filter element is in mechanical contact with the capillary suction dryer; and

wherein the fitting area is formed by a recess area that is specifically adapted to mate with the capillary suction dryer.